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LDS Seek Quick Appeal on Mine Permit

BY LINDA FANTIN
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

LDS Church officials say they will ask Salt Lake County commissioners to reschedule a May 20 appeal of the church's granite-mining permit to avoid further delays in the project.

But if opponents have their way, the rock-removal operation never will happen.

David Carrier of Salt Lake City doubts The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can haul 11,400 tons of rock from its Little Cottonwood Canyon property without causing irreparable damage to the hillside. He and rock climber Robert Wuebker have urged commissioners to overrule the Planning Commission, deny the request for a conditional-use permit, and force the church to look elsewhere for its granite. "Obviously, this is the LDS Church's land, and they feel free and comfortable doing what they like with it," Wuebker said Thursday. "But we hope the church can be persuaded not to enforce its will on an unwilling community."

If not, there is always plan B: Sue. "Ideally, we could get all the parties together in a nonconfrontational setting and arrive at an authentic consensus to keep wild spaces reasonably wild," Wuebker said. "But we'll use whatever legal methods are available to us. . . . We can make it unpleasant and expensive for the church to attempt to quarry from the canyon."

So far, church officials have insisted that the stone for their new assembly building match that of the Salt Lake Temple across the street. But the 11,400 tons for the assembly building's veneer is far less than what pioneers carted down Little Cottonwood Canyon 140 years ago.

The church had hoped to start splitting and removing the boulders this month. But that was before the Planning Commission attached a list of 16 prerequisites before signing off on the permit, including submission of a detailed revegetation plan. And until the

"Obviously, this is the LDS Church's land, and they feel free and comfortable doing what they like with it. But we hope the church can be persuaded not to enforce its will on an unwilling community."

Robert Wuebker
Rock climber

appeal is heard, the church cannot proceed with any site work.

There are two possible alternatives to the May 20 date: April 15 or May 6. The first would be a tight squeeze given public-notice requirements, and the May 6 meeting appears too booked to accommodate what is expected to be a controversial and lengthy hearing.

Although Commissioner Randy Horiuchi has not decided whether to yank the church's permit, he said his willingness to hear the appeal should put to rest concerns that he intervened in the approval process on the church's behalf.

County planner Susan Crook told church architect Kerry Nielsen that Horiuchi wanted staff to bypass the Planning Commission and use its authority to grant the conditional-use permit, according to Nielsen's handwritten notes of the Feb. 26 phone conversation.

Horiuchi said he had not been contacted by church officials and that he simply asked county planner J.D. Johnson what process would be appropriate to handle the church's request.

Johnson confirmed that Horiuchi did not pressure him to subvert the Planning Commission on the granite-removal permit.

Shambles, Educator Says

Elastic Aptitude Test scores dropped 8 percent since 1989. A quarter of all high school students do not graduate, and the dropout rate climbs as high as 70 percent in inner-city schools.

Reversing the downward trend is a matter of resurrecting "old-fashioned virtues," Roche said. He cited examples of his elementary education in a one-room schoolhouse in Colorado's Rocky Mountains, at a time when high moral standards, prayer and respect for adults were taught as regularly as reading and arithmetic.

He also cited modern examples, including educational systems that introduce competition and free-market values into the equation. One such school is the Hillsdale Academy in Michigan, a private elementary school established by Roche in 1990.

The Academy's 70 students have finished in the 97th percentile on standardized national tests given to private and public school students.

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FRIDAY APRIL 3, 1998

"The American educational system does more harm than good to our children and the economy of our country," Roche told 250 attendees at the lun-